

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE

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INFO AMEMBASSY PANAMA

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USCINCSO

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E.O. 11652: NA

TAGS: CVIS PQ PN HA

SUBJ: REPATRIATION OF HAITIAN NATIONALS

REF: PANAMA 4825

1. TWO CONSULAR OFFICER WITNESSED ARRIVAL OF HAITIANS PAP 1400 AUGUST 11. ALL 36, INCLUDING 10 WOMEN (3 PREGNANT), APPEARED TO BE IN EXCELLENT HEALTH. WHILE APPREHENSIVE, THEY DID NOT APPEAR TO BE UNDULY FRIGHTENED. DISEMBARKATION WAS QUIET AND ORDERLY. (ACCOMPANYING CANAL ZONE POLICE CHIEF SAID THEY HAD CREATED NO DISTURBANCE OR TROUBLE WHATEVER ON FLIGHT.) PASSENGERS WERE LED TO NEARBY CARPORT WHERE HALF HOUR WAS SPENT SORTING OUT IDENTITIES. TEN ARMED SOLDIERS STOOD NEARBY BUT THERE WAS NO MENACE IN THEIR PRESENCE. TWO RED CROSS REPRESENTATIVES WERE PRESENT. THREE PREGNANT WOMEN WERE PUT IN SEDAN AND OTHERS IN ARMY TRUCK AND DRIVEN TO POLICE HEADQUARTERS. CHEIF OF AIRPORT SECURITY SAID HE EXPECTED GROUP WOULD BE LECTURED AND RELEASED THAT AFTERNOON OR FOLLOWING DAY.

2. EFFORTS AUGUST 12 TO DETERMINE STATUS RETURNEES UNSUCCESSFUL. CAPTAIN EMMANUEL ORCEL, ARMY OFFICER IN CHARGE OF OPERATION AND LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TROUBLE-SHOOTER FOR PRESIDENTIAL PALACE AND MINISTRY INTERIOR,

CALLED AT EMBASSY MORNING AUGUST 13 AND REPORTED THAT HE UNDER SPECIFIC ORDERS FROM PRESIDENT TO SPEED UP INTERROGATION OF RETURNEES AND RELEASE THEM AS SOON AS POSSIBLE BUT AT SAME TIME TO GET TO BOTTOM OF WHAT AUTHORITIES SUSPECT IS ORGANIZED SMUGGLING OPERATION. ORCEL SAID THAT ELEVEN OTHER HAITIANS HAD BEEN RETURNED FROM JAMAICA ON AUG 9 AND THAT THERE WAS A DEFINITE LINK BETWEEN THEM AND THE 36 FROM PANAMA. THE AUTHORITIES HAVE LEARNED THAT EACH PERSON PAID \$200 TO \$400 (SOME ARE REPORTED TO HAVE PAID \$700) TO BE SMUGGLED OUT AND THEY

ARE NOW DETERMINED TO FIND OUT WHO WAS PAID, WHO ORGANIZED THE SMUGGLING, WHERE AND HOW THE BOATS WERE BUILT, ETC.

3. ORCEL SAID THAT HIS INTERROGATION OF THE JAMAICA 1 HAD FINISHED ONLY THIS MORNING AND THAT HE EXPECTED IT WOULD TAKE SEVERAL DAYS BEFORE HE FINISHED WITH THE 36. AT THE MOMENT THE AUTHORITIES ARE TRYING TO DETERMINE IF ANY PROVIDED A FALSE IDENTITY OR ARE WANTED BY THE POLICE. ORCEL COMMENTED THAT ALL 36 ARE PEASANT TYPES WHO ARE AMONG THOSE LEAST LIKELY TO ENCOUNTER DIFFICULTIES WITH THE AUTHORITIES FOR THEIR POLITICAL ACTIVITIES AND BELIEFS, IF ANY, AND THEREFORE ARE THE BEST LIKELY CANDIDATES TO CLAIM POLITICAL ASYLUM. HE POINTED OUT THAT NONE OF THE JAMAICA 11 HAD REQUESTED ASYLUM IN THE UNITED STATES AND BELIEVED THAT THE 36 HAD DONE SO ONLY BECAUSE THEY FOUND THEMSELVES IN THE CANAL ZONE AND ON AMERICAN TERRITORY AND SOUTH TO CAPITALIZE ON THAT FACT. HE FURTHER SAID THAT THE AUTHORITIES BELIEVE THIS SMUGGLING OPERATION IS DESIGNED TO GET CHEAP LABOR INTO THE UNITED STATES FOR PLANTATION WORK, IMPLYING THAT THERE MUST BE AMERICAN CONNECTIONS WITH THE OPERATION. OF THE 47 PERSONS INVOLVED ALL BUT 3 COME FROM THE LEOGANE AREA ON THE NORTH COAST OF THE SOUTH PENINSULA JUST WEST OF PORT-AU-PRINCE. THEIR DEPARTURE FROM HAITI COULD NOT HAVE BEEN JUST AN IMPROMPTU ADVENTURE AMONG ACQUAINTANCES SEEKING JOBS ABROAD BUT HAD TO BE AN ORGANIZED EFFORT, ACCORDING TO ORCEL. THE GOH IS NOT PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN THE FACT THAT THESE PERSONS LEFT HAITI ILLEGALLY OR FABRICATED CLAIMS TO POLITICAL ASYLUM, BUT RATHER IN GETTING TO THE BOTTOM OF HOW THESE MASS DEPARTURES ARE ORGANIZED AND WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM. ORCEL SAID THAT HE BELIEVES MAJORITY OF THOSE NOW DETAINED WILL SHORTLY BE RELEASED BUT THAT THOSE WITH OBVIOUS KNOWLEDGE OF ASPECTS OF SMUGGLING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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OPERATION WILL BE HELD FOR DETAILED INTERROGATION. BARRING POLICE INTEREST IN PARTICULAR INDIVIDUALS FOR SOME UNRELATED EVENT, HE SAID THAT LL SHOULD BE RELEASED WITHIN WEEK OR SO.

4. ORCEL WENT OUT OF WAY TO CREATE AIR OF GOH REASONABLENESS AND COOPERATION, AND UNDERSLIMING OF OUR CONCERN ABOUT THESE PERSONS. HE INDICATED HE WOULD BE MOST HAPPY TO KEEP US ADVISED OF STATUS OF EACH AND SAID HE HAD NO OBJECTIONS TO OUR

MAKING LATER INQUIRY ABOUT THEM. EMBASSY DELIBERATELY DID NOT MENTION SERGE DODARD FOR FEAR OF COMPROMISING HIM OR BRINGING HIM TO SPECIAL ATTENTION OF AUTHORITIES (ALTHOUGH IT IS HIGHLY PROBABLE THEY KNOW OF HIS SPECIAL CLAIM TO ASYLUM WHILE IN PANAMA) BUT INTENDS TO INCLUDE HIM AMONG GROUP OF NAMES PRESUMABLY SELECTED AT RANDOM WHICH WILL BE PRESENTED TO ORCEL WITHIN NEXT FEW DAYS FOR HIS COMMENTS ON STATUS AND WHEREABOUTS OF EACH.

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